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DD/S 68-577

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Executive Director-Comptroller

THROUGH : Deputy Director for Support DEC 12 1968

SUBJECT : Proposed Revised Fitness Reporting System

REFERENCES : (a) Memo dtd 20 June 68 fr DD/S to D/Pers; same subj  
(b) Memo dtd 13 Mar 68 fr D/Pers to Ex Dir-Compt; same subj

1. This memorandum submits recommendations for your approval; these recommendations are contained in paragraph 7.

2. Comments have now been received from all the Deputies and the Inspector General on the Deputy Director for Plans' proposal (Tab A) to revise the Fitness Report System. Summarized at Tab B, these comments show a definite reaction against the proposed changes with particularly strong objections registered against the change to a three-grade scale (Outstanding, Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory), instead of the present five-grade scale for rating overall performance. The Deputy Director for Intelligence has submitted a counter proposal (Tab C) to divide the Fitness Report into two parts, leaving the present report essentially unchanged as a performance rating report with the second part containing an appraisal of those factors necessary for career management such as potential, intellectual and social talents, creativity and the like. This portion would not be shown to the individual.

3. My conclusion is that most of the changes to our Fitness Report System proposed by the DD/P are desirable except for the proposed change in rating scale, and with this exception, can be accomplished within the present format. I would reject the proposed change to the rating scale for a number of reasons.

a. The Agency's need is for more rather than fewer quality groupings. The difficulties at the career board level in ranking people is one example of this need.

b. The Professional Manpower Committee used a seven-point scale in evaluating approximately 1,700 young professionals in their study. Evidently they felt the need for more rather than fewer grading levels and the results are rather interesting as can be seen at Tab D. The Committee achieved a more desirable and useful distribution curve and one which drastically reduced the clustering of people at the "Strong" level.

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- c. The vote of the other Deputies and the Inspector General is overwhelmingly against this change to the present five-point scale.
4. Other recommendations should be implemented and can be accomplished within the present system.

- a. It would be very desirable to improve the role of the reviewing officer, as suggested in the DD/P proposal. The reviewing official might be required to include a brief evaluation of performance, potential, and future utilization. He can play a stronger part in resolving critical differences of opinion between the individual and the rater and between the rater and himself, particularly if the ratings are adversely critical. The ranking by the reviewing official as suggested in the DD/P proposal might be more difficult particularly in cases where the reviewing official has a limited number of people in a given grade.
- b. The DD/P proposal that there be a performance consultation at least once a year as a separate transaction with certification that such a consultation has been held would seem to be an in-house practice which could be instituted by the Deputies within current Agency policy if they cared to do so.
- c. The proposal to combine the revised rating scale with a descriptive rating of duties need not stand or fall on the adoption of the revised rating scale. My thought here is that the DD/P could adopt this recommendation on the basis of the present rating scale as an "in-house" requirement.
5. While the proposal for follow-up action on an overall rating of "Unsatisfactory" is no different to the present instructions for the rating of "Weak," the low usage rate in the present system for both the "Adequate" and "Weak" ratings reflects more on our supervisory practices than on the format. (Tab E) Nevertheless, the DD/P has a point to make when he says in his recommendation for a three-point scale that, "we would no longer have to struggle with the meaning of the marginal 'Adequate' in connection with initiating an adverse action." Furthermore, he is absolutely correct in stating that the present rating of Adequate does not provide a definable or defensible basis for taking adverse action; the definition of Adequate being, "performance meets all requirements. It is entirely satisfactory and is characterized neither by deficiency nor excellence." (Tab F) It seems to me that our scale is at fault in that it drops off too abruptly from Adequate which is an entirely satisfactory rating to Weak which is an unsatisfactory rating. I would propose to meet this valid criticism by redefining the Adequate rating to provide a better gradation in our present five-point scale even though this action may have some "after the fact" implications.

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6. The proposal to recognize an "Outstanding" rating in a positive manner by a Merit Award or Quality Step Increase, when combined with the proposed three-point scale, would accentuate the clustering of ratings to an even greater degree than at present with the result that just about everybody would be graded in the middle satisfactory grouping. However, the concept has merit with the present scale if left on a discretionary basis.

7. In summary, it appears to me that the DD/P proposal makes two solid points; namely, the indefinite role of the reviewing official and the deficiency of the gradations in the low end of the scale. I believe that the improvements that the DD/P seeks can be accomplished within the present format of our Fitness Report System without losing the continuity and understanding we now enjoy. Accordingly, it is proposed:

a. The present five-point rating scale be continued but that the rating of Adequate be redefined as follows,

"Performance meets most requirements. It is characterized neither by serious deficiency *or* excellence." *No R*

b. The role of the reviewing official be clarified by a change to the present Instructions whereby he would be responsible for narrative comment on potential and utilization and would be expected to comment on the liberality or the strictness of the rater where possible; and by a change to our Regulations by which the reviewing official would be responsible for resolving critical differences of opinion between the individual and the rater, particularly if the ratings are adversely critical.

c. That a formal period of instruction on Fitness Report responsibilities be made part of the supervision and management courses to the end that the fitness report serve the management reporting as well as the employee relations function.

d. That the DD/I proposal for a two-part report be deferred for the moment until the full implications of the study on Managing the Succession Problem be realized, since this study includes a similar proposal.

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✓ Robert S. Wattles  
Director of Personnel

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The recommendations contained in paragraph 7 are approved.

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L. K. White  
Executive Director-Comptroller

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